

## REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: COMMUNITIES AND CONCERNS BY STATE (EJ Issues Summaries)

DATE: March 10, 2021

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PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: ECOS Meeting Preparation

DEADLINE DATE: 3/10/2021

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### BACKGROUND:

In preparation for the ECOS meeting, below is a summary of some community concerns in Region 6 that the Office of Communities, Tribes, and Environmental Assessment has worked with and/or continues to work with.

#### Arkansas

- **Crossett** has a population of about 5,500 residents and is located in southeastern Arkansas, nine miles north of the state's border with Louisiana. Residents from one of Crossett's predominantly African-American neighborhoods have been concerned for many years about air emissions (specifically hydrogen sulfide) and water discharges from the Georgia-Pacific LLC paper facility (GP). Community members living near the GP facility complained of frequent breathing problems, eye and throat irritation, corroded HVAC systems, and oppressive odors. They also claim there is a higher rate of cancer and other health issues due to chemicals from GP in the air and water. Crossett Concerned Citizens for Environmental Justice (CCCEJ), led by Mr. David Bouie, was formed to better address the community's concerns with GP. In November 2019, GP began permanently shutting down the bleached board machines, the extrusion plant, woodyard, pulp mill, and portions of the energy complex which will result in a reduction of harmful air emissions from the facility.

#### Louisiana

- **Mossville** - Representatives of Concerned Citizens of Mossville (formerly Mossville Environmental Action Network (MEAN)), are concerned about the location of monitors in Mossville. EPA has no ambient air monitors in the area for air toxics and company (SASOL) monitors may have been installed, EPA Air Permitting is verifying. Community members have made several requests that EPA visit Mossville. During the February, 2020 Jacksonville, FL., National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Meeting, "No Community Left Behind" [ [HYPERLINK "https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-uSVrHlt4A,a"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-uSVrHlt4A,a) ] a video on Mossville, was shown to the NEJAC and featured Delmar and Christine Bennett. R6 has worked with the Bennetts over the years regarding activities relating to Mossville. There was an industry buy-out of the community beginning in 2013 and the Bennetts and others did not accept the buyout.
- **Colfax, LA**- Community is working with LDEQ and EPA on issues surrounding **Clean Harbors** open burn facility. Clean Harbors burns munitions and explosive chemicals from propellant for car air bags, solid rocket fuel, Claymore mines, 20- and 40-millimeter artillery shells, TNT and black powder. On January 3, 2020 LDEQ issued an intent to deny Clean Harbors the renewal of its hazardous waste operating permit, stating the company failed to adequately consider other technologies besides open burning. The permit is one of several the company needs to continue to run the facility. The community has raised concerns about the open burning of military ammunitions and pyrotechnics and the negative impacts they feel it is causing on the people who live near the facility (plumes well beyond the fence

line of the facility, sores on their bodies, breathing problems, animals dying, loud booms, shifting of their homes.)

Currently, LDEQ and Clean Harbors are negotiating the terms of the new permit which could take years. In the meantime, the 2007 permit is administratively extended.

- Climate impacts on **Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw** tribe – Due to land subsidence, sea level rise the Isle de Jena Charles has gone from encompassing more than 22,000 acres to 320 acres. In January 2016, HUD awarded the state of Louisiana \$48.3 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for the resettlement of Isle de Jean Charles. A 515-acre tract of farmland in Terrebonne Parish was purchased on January 2019 to be the site of the new community. Concerns have emerged regarding the tribe having a say in the vision for their community.
- **Alexandra and Pineville-** Communities are concerned about negative impacts of creosote contamination from two creosote facilities located in their communities
- **Denka-** Residences in the LaPlace neighborhoods surrounding the Denka facility are concerned about high levels of chloroprene and elevated risks from chloroprene emissions. In March 2020, EPA deployed SPods at each of the six existing monitoring locations. The SPods were outfitted with a photoionizing detector (PID) that continuously analyzed the air column for total volatile organic compounds (VOCs) collected a 24-hour air sample once a specified concentration was exceeded. EPA observed that the installation of control devices that have reduced the amount of chloroprene present in the neighborhoods. The objective of the data monitoring was changed to focus on short term chloroprene emission spike events that disproportionately impacted the annual averages to help understand the frequency and magnitude of chloroprene spikes identify possible actions that Denka could take to further reduce chloroprene in the community. The monitoring was scheduled to end in December 2020 and was extended by 60 days to collect data during the plant turn-a-round that was scheduled for late January 2021.

## New Mexico

- **South Albuquerque** concerns about cumulative emissions -A Title VI complaint states that the health impacts due to various air emission has resulted in an elevated incidence of disease and mortality in communities of color in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County. The complaint alleged that the Albuquerque Air Quality Division and the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board discriminated against minority residents in violation of Title VI by: 1) not considering cumulative impacts when permitting air polluting facilities and 2) denying a request for a hearing to adopt a requirement for considering cumulative impacts in the permitting process.

The communities claim they have higher than expected rates of disease associated with the cumulative impacts from air pollution sources that are in their neighborhoods. Residents want to be engaged more seriously in the permitting of facilities located or locating to their neighborhood and taken seriously when they participate in the public participation process for air permits. The communities allege that the City and County, and even EPA, have approached their concerns with bias and without a fundamental understanding of how environmental racism has impacted these issues. The communities would like to be seen as a partner rather than an impediment when they voice concerns, and their overall desire is to find solutions that impact outcomes rather than just processes for issues affecting their neighborhoods. ECRCO is working with the Albuquerque Environmental Health Department, Albuquerque Air Quality Board to resolve the Title VI complaint following the Informal Resolution Agreement process.

- **North Railroad Avenue Plume Superfund site, Espanola, NM-** A 30-year in-situ bioremediation remedy was selected by EPA in a 2001 Record of Decision to address groundwater contamination. EPA funded the groundwater cleanup as a Long-Term Response Action (LTRA) for a period of ten years, as required pursuant to the Superfund law and National Contingency Plan (NCP). The ten-year LTRA and federal financing began in 2009 after the remedy was designed, constructed, and determined to be operational and functional. In 2015, EPA's Second Five-year Review of the remedy found that significant progress had been made on cleaning up a shallow contaminant plume. However, the remedy for the deeper plumes was not as effective when compared to the results for the shallow plume. In 2019, at the end of the 10-year LTRA period, the remedy was transferred to the state of New Mexico (State) for continued operation and maintenance as required by the Superfund law and NCP. This was done despite the lack of significant progress for the deeper plumes since the cleanup of the shallow plume was successful. On December 11, 2019, the EPA Region 6 Superfund Program held a community meeting in Espanola. EPA and the State also met with representatives from the City, Rio Arriba County, and the Pueblo of Santa Clara to discuss the Superfund site. EPA informed stakeholders that no exposure was known to be occurring to the community from this site. No one was known to be drinking contaminated groundwater and there was no intrusion of chemical vapors into homes or other buildings at levels that would be a health concern. Residents expressed concerns with the lack of progress of the remedy on the deeper plumes and that the 10-year LTRA period should be restarted with continued federal financing. They questioned whether the remedy for the deeper plumes should be considered operational and functional. They also requested a new remedial investigation and focused feasibility study be performed to identify other remediation alternatives. Residents pointed to the pump-and-treat technology that was used at another NPL site in Albuquerque. Residents believed that pump-and-treat was a better choice for cleaning up groundwater and questioned why such a remedy was not selected for Espanola. EPA turned off the pump-and-treat remediation system in Albuquerque because it was ineffective in achieving the cleanup goals.

Another groundwater contaminant plume was discovered by the State in Espanola in 2017 that originated from a different source than the dry cleaner facility (Norge Town Dry Cleaner) that caused the contamination at the site. Residents want the new plume to be part of the Superfund site. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Groundwater Quality Bureau's Remediation Oversight Section (ROS) is evaluating this new plume under its regulatory authority.

## TEXAS

- **Kashmere Gardens** is a low income, predominately African American community in north east downtown Houston's Fifth Ward that is believed to be impacted by contamination from a cresote plume from Union Pacific Railyard (UPRR). There are 56 residential and 18 multifamily property units over the plume and there are ongoing efforts to clean up contamination by EPA and TCEQ. There are incidences of increase levels of adult and childhood cancers. In January 2021 the Texas Department of State Health Services released a study indicating higher than normal incidence of childhood leukemia in the area. A follow-up survey will be conducted by DSHS to determine potential historical exposure risk areas. Houston's Mayor has requested that UPRR aid in helping to relocate residents from the contaminated areas and asked EPA and TCEQ to declare the area a Superfund site. OEJ and LCRD are working with the city of Houston and community members to provide a Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) grant. Efforts are being made to bring HUD, FEMA, and TCEQ into the conversations.